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1 — That sinking feeling: Why Louisiana's coastal crisis is the worst in the U.S., New Orleans Times Picayune, 4/19/2017

<http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/04/louisianas-coast-is-sinking-fa.html#incart-river-index>

No other part of the coastal United States is sinking as fast as Louisiana, according to an updated assessment of sea level rise by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The state's coast is going under at a rate of about an inch every three years -- almost three feet over a century.

2 — More wetland projects, shoreline protection sought in Louisiana coastal plan, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 4/18/2017

<http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/04/louisiana-coastal-master-plan-comments.html#incart-most-shared-environment>

More than 1,300 comments on Louisiana's proposed 2017 master plan update for coastal restoration and hurricane protection were submitted by the public to the state Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, which is scheduled to vote on the master plan Wednesday (April 19).

3 — At former Superfund site, Slidell breaks ground for Heritage Park marina, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 4/17/2017

<http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/04/slidell-breaks-ground-on-long-.html>

Ground was finally broken Tuesday (April 18) -- ceremoniously, at least -- for a \$2.6 million, years-in-the-making marina on Bayou Bonfouca at Slidell's Heritage Park. Mayor Freddy Drennan and other officials, including one from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, grabbed golden shovels and turned over some dirt to mark the start of construction at the location -- part of which was a federal Superfund cleanup site in the 1990s.

4 — Fallin signs bill to end tax credit for wind energy, Tulsa World, 4/19/2017

http://www.tulsaworld.com/homepagelatest/fallin-signs-bill-to-end-tax-credit-for-wind-energy/article_8ba8c4e5-211c-5ecf-b362-6a50e05f0032.html

Gov. Mary Fallin on Monday signed a measure to speed up the elimination of a tax credit that goes to the wind industry. House Bill 2298, by Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, and Senate Pro Tem Mike Schulz, R-Altus, sets the expiration date at July 1 rather than allowing it to continue until 2021.

5 — Enel starts construction of Red Dirt wind project in Oklahoma, The Oklahoman, 4/19/17

<http://newsok.com/enel-starts-construction-of-red-dirt-wind-project-in-oklahoma/article/5545997>

Enel Green Power North America Inc. said Tuesday it had started construction on the Red Dirt wind farm in Kingfisher and Logan counties, the company's ninth project in Oklahoma. The Red Dirt project will be Enel's largest in Oklahoma, bringing its total wind capacity in the state to more than 1,430 megawatts.

6 — Legislator says Texas should wrangle floods to ease droughts, San Antonio Express-News, 4/18/2017

<http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/San-Antonio-legislator-says-Texas-should-wrangle-11082139.php>

A state legislator from San Antonio has a plan to solve some of Texas' water woes by capturing the floodwaters that occasionally inundate the state and stopping the evaporation that robs reservoirs of water.

7 — Mississippi River rises above 11 feet at New Orleans, triggers levee inspections, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 4/18/17

http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/04/river_rises_above_11_feet_at_n.html#incart_most_shared-environment

The Mississippi River was at 11.63 feet at 5 p.m. Tuesday (April 18) at the Carrollton Gauge in New Orleans, triggering the first phase of Army Corps of Engineers "flood fight" rules: increased inspections and restrictions on work on and near levees.

8 — EPA considers repealing two Obama air pollution rules, The Hill, 4/18/17

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/329409-epa-considers-repealing-two-obama-air-pollution-rules>

The Trump administration is considering whether to repeal or revise two major Obama administration regulations limiting air pollution from large sources.

9 — Eddy County boasts cleaner air in new report, Carlsbad (NM) Current-Argus, 4/18/17

<http://www.currentargus.com/story/news/local/2017/04/19/eddy-county-boasts-cleaner-air-new-report/100615476/>

Pearland City Council is taking action against the Blue Ridge Landfill in neighboring Fort Bend County in an attempt to alleviate the odors that periodically waft over homes and businesses in Shadow Creek Ranch. At its April 10 meeting, council members approved a resolution to petition the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to immediately suspend the operating permit for Blue Ridge Landfill.

10 — Sales go Kaput: Wild hog poison halted due to concerns for Louisiana black bears, Baton Rouge Advocate, 4/18/17

http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_c763d8b2-24ff-11e7-b6ec-c77e37856176.html

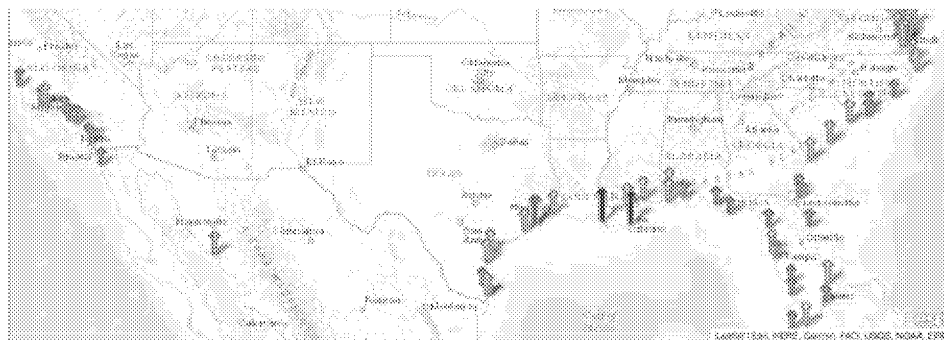
The Louisiana Agriculture Commissioner has suspended the eventual sale of poison designed to curb the wild hog population due to concerns over its effect on the Louisiana Black Bear.

11 — Construction begins on segment of New Mexico power line, Albuquerque Journal, 4/18/17

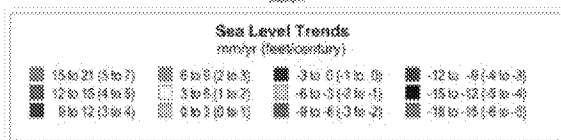
<https://www.abqjournal.com/989471/construction-begins-on-400m-new-mexico-texas-power-line.html>

Xcel Energy has started construction in New Mexico on a 345-kilovolt transmission line meant to hook up with electric distribution operations in Texas.

That sinking feeling: Why Louisiana's coastal crisis is the worst in the U.S.



The map above illustrates regional trends in sea level, with arrows representing the direction and magnitude of change. Click on an arrow to access additional information about that station.



By [Tristan Baurick](#), [NOLA.com](#) | [Times-Picayune](#)

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on April 18, 2017 at 4:32 PM, updated April 18, 2017 at 4:35 PM

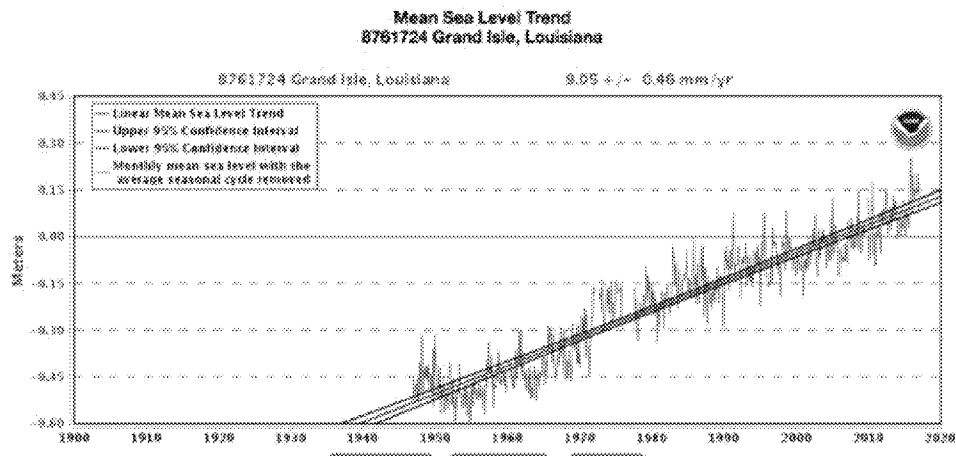
comments

Louisiana is winning the race to the bottom of the sea.

No other part of the coastal United States is sinking as fast as Louisiana, according to an [updated assessment of sea level rise by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#). The state's coast is going under at a rate of about an inch every three years -- almost three feet over a century.

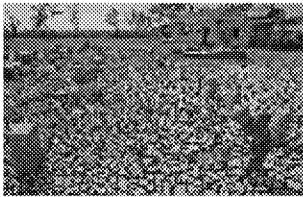
Other vulnerable low-lying parts of the U.S. coastline, such as in Florida and Maryland, are sinking by one to two feet every 100 years. But in the updated report, the only spots marked in red are in Louisiana.

"Louisiana has the highest rate in the country," William Sweet, an oceanographer for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said Tuesday (April 18). "And that really poses a problem."



Grand Isle is losing about an inch every three years, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Graph by NOAA).

The state's sinking coastline means the loss of marshlands that protect populated areas from storm surges and flooding. "You're losing a lot of land and a lot of buffer," Sweet said.



N.O. area sea level rise seen among highest in world

Why is Louisiana's coast shrinking so fast? Climatic change and other factors are in play, but the biggest single reason appears to be the Mississippi River, Sweet said. Much of the state's coastline is made of the fine grit and sand flowing out of the river. Relatively soft and fluffy, this sediment compacts as it settles over the years. It also erodes easily, giving Louisiana a much faster rate of subsidence.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration monitors sea level rise at other river deltas in the U.S., but none are like the Mississippi Delta. "It's hard to find a sister system that can compare to the scale and magnitude of the Mississippi," Sweet said.

More wetland projects, shoreline protection sought in Louisiana coastal plan

By [Mark Schleifstein, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune](#)

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on April 18, 2017 at 3:19 PM

Louisiana's proposed [2017 master plan update](#) for [coastal restoration](#) and [hurricane protection](#) should contain more [marsh creation projects](#) in the Barataria and Terrebonne basins. It needs more projects protecting coastal and lake shorelines on the western part of the state. And it needs more money for flood-proofing businesses, elevating houses and moving people out of frequently flooded locations.

Those are the major themes of more than 1,300 comments submitted by the public to the state [Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority](#), which is scheduled to vote on the master plan Wednesday (April 19). The authority's staff has incorporated some of the suggestions in updated versions of the master plan and the 2018 annual plan, which acts as the budget of the master plan. If both documents are approved, which is expected, they will be submitted to the [Legislature](#) for a vote in its current session ending June 8.

The written comments include several complex recommendations from public officials, business leaders, scientists, fishers and the general public, along with many simpler recommendations. Too, there are hundreds of form letters distributed by a coalition of interest groups such as Native American tribes, interfaith community organizations and Vietnamese Americans.

The letters, distributed in both English and Vietnamese, included recommendations that both the master plan and the 2018 annual plan incorporate a community economic development approach, to assure the participation of local small businesses and guarantee good wages and job training as part of project construction efforts. The letters also seek greater public outreach and a balancing of the needs of traditional business and industry stakeholders with those of coastal community residents, and they ask restoration and structural projects be built along with "non-structural" projects to floodproof some businesses, elevate homes and relocate some residents in areas most at risk of flooding.

| MAJOR RESTORATION CATEGORIES | AMOUNT ALLOCATED TO LA |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. Restore & Conserve Habitat | |
| Wetlands, Coastal, & Nearshore | \$4,009,062,700 |
| Habitat Projects – Federally Managed Lands | \$50,000,000 |
| Early Restoration | \$259,625,700 |
| 2. Restore Water Quality | |
| Nutrient Reduction (Nonpoint Source) | \$20,000,000 |
| 3. Replenish & Protect Living Coastal & Marine Resources | |
| Sea Turtles | \$10,000,000 |
| Submerged Aquatic Vegetation | \$22,000,000 |
| Marine Mammals | \$50,000,000 |
| Birds | \$148,500,000 |
| Early Restoration – Birds | \$71,937,300 |
| Oysters | \$26,000,000 |
| Early Restoration – Oysters | \$14,874,300 |
| 4. Provide & Enhance Recreational Opportunities | |
| Provide & Enhance Recreational Opportunities | \$38,000,000 |
| Early Restoration – Recreational Opportunities | \$22,000,000 |
| 5. Monitoring, Adaptive Management, Administrative Oversight | |
| Monitoring & Adaptive Management | \$225,000,000 |
| Administration Oversight & Comp. Planning | \$33,000,000 |
| MINIMUM NRD FUNDING ALLOCATED TO LA | \$5,000,000,000 |

\$663 million proposed for coastal restoration, levees

The state's coastal protection and restoration annual plan includes millions for New Orleans area projects.

Jefferson Parish President Mike Yenni recommended inclusion of a project to build tidal ring levees to protect Jean Lafitte. That project was part of the 2012 version of the master plan, but it was dropped as too expensive in the 2017 version.

Yenni also recommended the state drop its plans for an almost \$1 billion Ama sediment diversion project. It would siphon sediment from the Mississippi River near the existing Davis Pond freshwater diversion on the West Bank. "The addition of the Ama sediment diversion's 50,000 (cubic feet per second) of proposed freshwater flow into the vicinity of the Davis Pond outfall area will cause higher water levels in addition to sea level rise, especially for the town of Jean Lafitte, which has no structural flood protection proposed in the current draft 2017 master plan," Yenni said.

He said money for the Ama diversion should be reallocated to marsh creation projects. Those include restoration of a second phase of the now-complete Mississippi River long-distance sediment pipeline, which would continue to build a land bridge across the Barataria Basin between the Barataria Bay Waterway and Lafourche Parish.

"Currently there is a serious void in projects on the western reach of Barataria Bay, and implementation of this project will provide a conduit for future coastal restoration projects in this area to be built using Mississippi River sediments," Yenni said. He also recommended restoring a project that would protect the southern shoreline of Lake Salvador, and a return of the 2012 plan's Barataria Bay rim marsh creation project, another dredging or pipeline project.

The Terrebonne Parish Coastal Zone Management and Restoration Advisory Committee warned that the 2017 master plan failed to recognize the need to respond to the worst land loss rates in the state, which are occurring in eastern parts of Terrebonne. The committee also supported recommendations made by

Parish President Gordon Dove to place more emphasis on restoring barrier islands just off the parish's shoreline.

The committee also wants projects aimed at restoring the lake rim and land bridge between Bayou Terrebonne and Bayou Pointe Aux Chenes, and to use the long-distance sediment pipeline strategy to move sediment from the Atchafalaya River to the western Terrebonne Basin and eventually to the eastern Terrebonne Basin.

Here are excerpts from other comments submitted to the state:

- **Charter boat Capt. George Ricks**, president of the Save Louisiana Coalition, which has opposed may of the state's proposed sediment and freshwater diversions because of their potential to damage fisheries, recommended that the state drop the proposed Violet diversion that would water into the Central Wetlands Unit adjacent to the Lower 9th Ward and Arabi. Instead, he urged using the money for marsh creation projects in Lake Lery and the Biloxi Marsh, or to help rebuild the Chandeleur Islands.

Save Louisiana Coalition also recommended that the state consider a long-distance sediment pipeline for rebuilding marsh along the east bank of the Mississippi River. And it warned it would be monitoring the state's efforts to permit the Mid-Barataria, Mid-Breton and Lower Breton sediment diversions, especially for their potential to violate the federal finding that wetlands on both sides of the river are considered protected "essential fish habitat" under federal law. The group also recommended that the Caernarvon freshwater diversion not be redesigned to move more sediment from the river into adjacent wetland areas.

- **Kenneth Ragas** of New Orleans, a long-time opponent of the state's sediment diversion plans, said the master plan ignores concerns that the modeling used to determine whether the diversion will work is erroneous. "The 2017 master plan contains the same unjust river diversion projects as the 2012 plan. It is obvious that public input is totally ignored by Mr. Bradberry and his staff. CPRA was established for the people, not for projects to be shoved down the throats of the stake holders." Johnny Bradberry is chairman of the coastal authority.
- **The Sierra Club** recommended that flood-proofing, elevation and relocation become a top priority for the coastal authority. "Instead of separating large-scale engineering projects from smaller-scale community solutions like home raising, ensure that the two go hand in hand," said a letter from the group, which also recommended that the amount of money for these non-structural efforts be increased to 20 percent or more of the \$50 billion plan. "Non-structural implementation can happen now, and will increase safety and strengthen communities on the front lines of the coastal crisis as the transition of coastal restoration gets going."

Sierra Club officials noted that there's only \$500,000 included for non-structural projects in the 2018 annual plan, and that non-structural money is listed as "to be determined" for 2019 and 2020. "For a truly people-centered plan, we recommend non-structural [be] prioritized for continuous funding within CPRA's budget," the group said, adding that there also needs to be a change in the name of the program from "non-structural" to something more understandable, such as flood risk and resiliency.

Club officials also said the plan is missing recommendations for transition funding and adaptive management measures for fishing communities. The report only points out that such communities would see reductions in annual damage and improvements in habitat sustainability for fisheries resources they use.

"From lease relocation to retrofitting boats to payouts, there are multiple tactics and lessons to be learned from talking to fishing communities and working with fishing communities on a plan," the group said. Its comment pointed out that there are lessons to be learned, both good and bad, from the way

fishers were treated during the BP oil spill, ranging from captain compensation to payments for subsistence fishing losses.

Sierra Club officials also said the plan should identify the pending oil and gas industry lawsuits, or potential settlements of those suits, as a potential source of revenue in the plan.

- **The Mississippi River Delta Restoration Campaign**, a coalition including the Environmental Defense Fund, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana and the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, recommended that the plan better explain potential future funding sources. These include borrowing money via bond issues, entering into public-private funding partnerships, applying mitigation dollars from industrial development to restoration projects and dedicating to master plan projects as much as 20 percent of money the state might gain from selling part of its 1998 tobacco settlement.

The group also recommended expanding the large-scale Barataria Marsh creation project, which used a long-distance pipeline, by 6,000 acres, rather than waiting until engineering and design of the Mid-Barataria sediment diversion is completed.

The Delta Campaign also recommends speeding construction of the East Timbalier Island restoration project off the coast of Lafourche Parish, and determining whether other parts of the original Timbalier Island footprint can be restored.

It further recommends expanding the scope of the master plan's projects to restore the New Orleans East land bridge, which includes the Chef Mentheur and Rigolets passes and serves as a speed bump for hurricane storm surge entering Lake Pontchartrain.

And the group recommends that the state study using Mardi Gras Pass, a natural crevasse in the Bohemia Spillway, as either an additional sediment diversion or as the location of the proposed Lower Breton sediment diversion.

- **Several individuals** raised concerns about the use of state and federal money to rebuild private land, and then letting the owners prohibit the public from hunting or fishing. "I understand that the land has to be saved, but what I don't understand is why the same people who put up the gates and fences can't pay to have it fixed!" said Andrew Tillman of Denham Springs.

"The marsh was raped by oil and gas companies and by their own admission are the blame for 40 percent of the deterioration; therefore they should be held accountable," said Rob Dupont of Theriot. "If public funds are used, the public should have access to said marsh." That same phrasing was used in a number of the responses.

- James Wilkins, director of the Louisiana Sea Grant Law and Program, urged officials to remember the human causes of coastal erosion in deciding on ownership and control issues involving land created by restoration projects. "A significant part of our plight is human disregard for natural systems," Wilkins said. "If private property owners are given ownership of created land, it should only be with the absolute prohibition of activities that damage that land, especially activities like dredging, that have been responsible in a large part for where we are now.

"This could be in the form of conservation easements that would acknowledge the public benefits of private land for storm surge protection, habitat, fisheries production, carbon sinks, etc.," he said.

"Likewise, if the created land is in state ownership, the state should not allow any activity that that would threaten to undo restoration. It will be a permanent black eye on the state of Louisiana if we seek and receive taxpayer money to restore our coast, then turn around and do the same stupid things that got us here in the first place."

- **Port of Morgan City Executive Director Raymond "Mac" Wade** raised concerns that the proposed Increase Atchafalaya Flow To Terrebonne Parish project, aimed at adding freshwater and sediment to the Terrebonne Basin, would change the speed of water flowing down Bayou Chene and the lower Atchafalaya River, including through Morgan City. "Will tows be affected in any way? Will more horsepower be required, thereby incurring more costs to industry?," he asked.

Also of concern are potential increases in velocity of water flowing through the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and the potential that sediment could build up at docks along the waterway, he said. "These are privately owned facilities [that] pay to maintain their own waterfronts," Wade said. "Will this increase their maintenance costs? Will there be any compensation from the state for any hardships created?"

He instead recommended the state review an alternative route for moving water from the Atchafalaya into the Terrebonne basin by increasing water flow from Lake Verret through Lake Palourde and Bayou Boeuf.

- The **Greater Lafourche Port Commission**, which operates Port Fourchon, disagrees with the master plan's depiction of wetland loss in the southern part of Lafourche Parish, pointing to its own publicly and privately financed restoration projects as giving more protection against land loss. The port has built a series of projects to mitigate damage that occurred as the port was being developed, including the recent construction of a forested ridge just west of the main port.
- **Delacroix Corp. President Mike Benge**, whose company is a major owner of wetlands in St. Bernard Parish, objects to the 2017 update not including a project for marsh terracing and marsh creation south of Big Mar in the Caernarvon diversion area. He also recommended expansion of efforts to restore portions of the shoreline and wetlands along Lake Lery in St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes. The company also supports the Mid-Breton sediment diversion and wants the state to turn the Caernarvon freshwater diversion into a sediment diversion.
- **Tangipahoa Parish President Robby Miller** requests that the \$8 million second phase of its Lake Pontchartrain shoreline protection rock jetty project be included in both the master plan and annual plan.
- **Andrew Wilson**, a New Orleans lawyer who represented the state in its successful court appeals of a \$1.3 billion award to oyster growers for damages caused to oyster beds by the Caernarvon diversion on the east bank of Plaquemines Parish, warned that similar lawsuits, successful or not, could delay the state's restoration efforts. "The lesson from this situation is that the state must make every effort now to allow oyster harvesters as well as other members of the commercial and recreational fishing communities, and anyone else potentially adversely affected, an optimum opportunity to mitigate any potential losses that might result from the coastal restoration projects associated with the master plan," Wilson said.
- **Jennifer Coulson**, president of the Orleans Audubon Society, the New Orleans chapter of the national environmental group, said the draft plan does not describe how effects of major new levee and flood control projects would be mitigated. "For example, the Pontchartrain Barrier, Morganza to the Gulf and the Upper Barataria Risk Reduction projects will jeopardize important estuaries. The plan needs to propose ways to build barriers that facilitate or mimic these natural processes via gates, diversions, etc., while still protecting people and homes."

She also recommended adding shoreline protection along the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge's coastline in Cameron Parish.

- **Monique Verdin**, a St. Bernard Parish resident and member of the Tribal Council for the United Houma Nation, encompassing St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes and the city of Gretna, said the plan does not adequately address the need to protect Native American cultural sites. "Many sacred cultural and heritage sites such as Indian mounds as well as cemeteries, in addition to important fishing communities, are found across southeast Louisiana. The protection of these sites should be prioritized and a metric should be included equal to 'working coast' or 'navigation'." She said the plan also fails to address the need to close oil and gas canals.
- **Sean Duffy Sr.**, executive director of the Big River Coalition, which represents shipping interests on the Mississippi River, pointed out that deepening the lower river's navigation channel to 50 feet would create about 1,500 acres of new wetlands in wildlife areas in the birdfoot delta through use of the dredged material.
- **Logan Burke**, executive director of the New Orleans-based Alliance for Affordable Energy, said the plan needs to place a greater emphasis on the need to reduce carbon emissions to help limit future sea level rise. "Reducing carbon pollution today will reduce the likelihood of the worst-case, high sea-level rise scenario which in turn would cost billions of dollars more in expensive engineers fixes to problems we should aim to prevent. Like health care, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," Burke said.
- **Richard Condrey**, a fisheries ecology professor at Louisiana State University, said that the master plan seems to assume a constant rate of land loss that has dropped to about 16 2/3 square miles per year, when his own calculations indicate the loss rate might actually be an average of almost 26 3/4 square miles per year. Condrey warned that some areas, including portions of Barataria Bay, might be experiencing much higher rates of land loss due to subsidence, and that the lower land loss rates "would greatly overestimate the time Louisiana's coastal residents have to respond to land loss in the near future."

He also warned the state that it could not simply "maintain" coastal barrier islands that it has just completed rebuilding for several billions of dollars. The same forces that caused large segments of the islands to disappear in the past will still be at work in the future, and will require similar future reconstruction efforts, he said.

- **Sherwood Gagliano**, chief executive of Coastal Environments Inc., an adviser on coastal restoration issues to St. Bernard Parish, and the developer of one of several approaches to building man-made oyster reefs to act as wave reduction features along wetlands, urged the restoration of such "living shoreline" projects to the plan.
- **Karen Wicker**, a scientist with Coastal Environments Inc., also recommended returning oyster barrier reefs to the plan, including two in the Biloxi Marsh area. "These reefs would have assisted in the stabilization of eroding shorelines but more importantly, if protected from destruction, could grow to resemble the historic subaerial reefs that once characterized the Biloxi Marshes and made it one of the most productive oyster producing areas in Louisiana."
- **Harvey Stern**, representing the New Orleans Group of the Sierra Club, warned that levee projects included in the plan might have the unintended effect of enticing development of wetland areas that remain on the protected side of the levees. He also points out that the state and local governments are in the middle of approving several residential and commercial developments in Covington and Ascension and Calcasieu parishes in low-lying or wetland areas. These also same areas are marked in the master plan as for non-structural project consideration, meaning the state might need to pay to flood-proof businesses, elevate houses above the National Flood Insurance Program's base flood elevation levels or give residents money to move away.

- **Doug Daigle**, coordinator for the Louisiana Hypoxia Working Group, said the plan does not properly address the state's coastal hypoxia problem, often labeled the "dead zone." He said the plan fails to recognize that a national plan to reduce nutrients in the Mississippi River has an interim goal of a 20 percent reduction in nutrient loading by 2025, a goal that Louisiana and other states along the river have committed to achieving.

But Louisiana's plan to reach its emission reduction goal is based on the use of the master plan's new sediment and freshwater diversions to help build wetlands. That would move some of the river's nutrients out of the river before they reach the Gulf of Mexico, where they cause the spring and summer algae blooms that create hypoxia. The problem, he said, is that the first major diversion called for in the plan - the Mid-Barataria sediment diversion -- won't even begin construction until 2021 or 2022, and won't be completed before the 2025 interim reduction goal.

- **David Lindenfield** of Baton Rouge recommends that the Baton Rouge area that flooded in August be included in the plan, because future flooding in that area might be caused or increased by backwater moving into the area from lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain during rainfall and surge events. Baton Rouge and adjacent parishes are not now considered part of the coastal area covered by the plan.

"An especially precarious waterway in this scenario is Bayou Manchac, a tributary of the Amite River, which is fed in turn by the tributaries of Bayou Fountain, Ward's Creek and Bayou Duplantier, all of which penetrate deep into south Baton Rouge," Lindenfield said.

"During the August 2016 flood, there was significant backflow in these waterways. Water levels in Bayou Manchac itself rose from 6 to 15 feet between August 12 and 14.," he said. "This water spilled over Alligator Bayou Road to the south into the Spanish Lake basin in Ascension Parish, where it stayed, flooding homes for several weeks. An event even half this size which did not reach Spanish Lake could easily flow back into the aforementioned tributaries to the north. There is of course need to do something about the flow of water in Bayou Manchac that would reduce the risk of flooding in both Ascension and East Baton Rouge parishes."

- **Randy Moertle** of Lockport, who represents large landowners in several locations on the coast, submitted comments on behalf of the Rainey Conservation Alliance, a coalition of landowners and land managers in Vermilion and Iberia parishes. He recommended more shoreline and bank protection projects in locations along the state's western coast, especially in locations where it would protect newly-built marshlands.

"It seems counter-intuitive to plan or actually construct a marsh creation project along a bay or navigation channel that has no foreshore protection barrier," Moertle said. "As we know, an unprotected shoreline will allow erosion and tidal scouring processes to continue unabated which will greatly diminish the effectiveness and longevity of any marsh creation projects constructed."

At former Superfund site, Slidell breaks ground for Heritage Park marina



By Robert Rhoden, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

[Email the author](#) | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on April 18, 2017 at 3:18 PM, updated April 18, 2017 at 5:07 PM

comment

Ground was finally broken Tuesday (April 18) -- ceremoniously, at least -- for a \$2.6 million, years-in-the-making marina on Bayou Bonfouca at Slidell's Heritage Park. Mayor Freddy Drennan and other officials, including one from the U.S. [Environmental Protection Agency](#), grabbed golden shovels and turned over some dirt to mark the start of construction at the location -- part of which was a federal Superfund cleanup site in the 1990s.

The work will include the removal of a fence that prevents boaters, at most points along the bulkhead, from getting out and walking into the park. "One of the things I've heard over and over again that Heritage

Park is not boater-friendly," Drennan said. "This way, it's going to be much more boater friendly.

"It's just going to be a great improvement. I'm sure it's going to be used quite a bit."

The project will create 65 transient boat slips and replace the failing bulkhead, said Mike Hattaway of project engineer Gulf Engineers and Consultants. It also will extend the bulkhead and sidewalk another 1,600 feet to Palmetto's restaurant.

Hattaway said 27 slips will be on floating docks and have electricity and water hookups. Thirty-eight slips will be on a fixed concrete pier without power and water, he said. Slip rentals will cost \$25 per day for boats shorter than 40 feet, \$45 per day for vessels 40 feet and longer.

City Hall said there will be nine finger pier slips for boats as long as 75 feet long, 18 slips for side-tie docking for boats as long as 55 feet and 1,025 linear feet of fixed concrete docks that can accommodate 38 boats with an average length of 26 feet.

The project is to be completed by February. The contractor is Gill's Crane & Dozer Service Inc. Slidell received a \$1.5 million boating infrastructure grant from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for the project.

City engineer Blaine Clancy said the groundbreaking represented "many years of hard work" involving the city, EPA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Toxic sites in Louisiana: 15 of the state's most polluted places

Take a look at 15 areas listed on the EPA's list of Superfund sites, which documents many of the country's most toxic places.

Casey Luckett Snyder, a Superfund re-use coordinator with the EPA regional office in Dallas, said Bayou Bonfouca was among the first sites in the United States to be listed for cleanup under the Superfund program, established in 1980. A wood treatment facility at the location

left a legacy of creosote contamination in the soil, groundwater and bayou.

"The bayou itself was so contaminated with raw creosote that it was biological sterile," Snyder said. "In fact, it caused second-degree burns to the divers who were diving to do the investigation prior to EPA's cleanup" in the mid-1990s.

Today, the area is teeming with life, Snyder said. Some 170,000 cubic yards of contaminated soils and bayou sediments were excavated and incinerated at the site, Snyder said. To date, almost 65 million gallons of contaminated groundwater have been treated, and groundwater treatment continues today.

Land revitalization is a primary goal of the EPA Superfund cleanup mission, Snyder said. "The Heritage Park marina project is a milestone."

http://www.tulsaworld.com/homepagelatest/fallin-signs-bill-to-end-tax-credit-for-wind-energy/article_8ba8c4e5-211c-5ecf-b362-6a50e05f0032.html

Fallin signs bill to end tax credit for wind energy

By Barbara Hoberock Tulsa World Apr 18, 2017



A truck drives by wind turbines near Okarche, Okla. Gov. Mary Fallin signed legislation Monday, that rolls back a 10-year tax credit for electricity generated by zero-emission facilities, an incentive for wind power generators as well as geothermal, solar and hydropower producers that's been in place since 2003. Sue Ogrocki/AP

OKLAHOMA CITY — Gov. Mary Fallin on Monday signed a measure to speed up the elimination of a tax credit that goes to the wind industry.

House Bill 2298, by Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, and Senate Pro Tem Mike Schulz, R-Altus, sets the expiration date at July 1 rather than allowing it to continue until 2021.

The measure would prevent facilities that start producing after July 1 from claiming the credit. Wind projects completed before the sunset are eligible to claim the credit for up to 10 years.

Since the zero emission tax credit was created, its use grew to slightly more than \$113 million in 2014 from nearly \$3.7 million in 2010.

With the credit, the state has become a national leader in wind energy, Fallin said.

Oklahoma ranks third in the nation in total installed wind capacity, she said.

"The zero emissions tax credit was key to the growth of wind energy in Oklahoma, and I'm grateful to the industry for their ambitious successes, as well as their willingness to work with the state to address our challenging budgetary circumstances," Fallin said. "Their leadership, along with the leadership of Speaker McCall and Senate Pro Tem Schulz, is a critical part of our continued investment in the future of our state. It is time to ensure that Oklahoma has a bright future, and continues its position as a prominent energy state."

Officials expect to have \$878 million less in crafting a fiscal year 2018 budget.

Schulz said the state could no longer afford the credit.

"Accelerating the end date of the wind-energy tax credit provides certainty for the industry and more predictability and stability long term in the state budget," Schulz said. "This bill will save the state a significant amount of money moving forward, freeing up revenue that can be used on high priorities like education, public safety and health care."

McCall said the bill will save taxpayers up to \$500 million over the next 10 years.

"We would not be here today without the help of many wind development companies who recognized this credit is unsustainable and were willing to work with us on this legislation," McCall said.

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Enel starts construction of Red Dirt wind project

Paul Monies Published: April 19, 2017 12:00 AM CDT Updated: April 19, 2017 12:00 AM CDT

Enel Green Power North America Inc. said Tuesday it had started construction on the Red Dirt wind farm in Kingfisher and Logan counties, the company's ninth project in Oklahoma.

The 300-megawatt wind farm is expected to be operational by the end of the year. It will have 91 turbines and sell electricity to the Grand River Dam Authority and T-Mobile U.S. Inc. under long-term contracts.

The Red Dirt project will be Enel's largest in Oklahoma, bringing its total wind capacity in the state to more than 1,430 megawatts. The project will cover 61,000 acres and employ 600 people during construction. During operations, it will have 12 full-time employees, Enel said.

"We are proud to continue our investment in Oklahoma and its communities and to do so with T-Mobile, a new corporate partner who shares our commitment to sustainability and community," said Rafael Gonzalez, head of Enel Green Power North America. "Red Dirt has been under development for several years and promises to be a project that will deliver millions in new revenue to support local services, education and drive economic stimulus in the region."

Enel said the T-Mobile agreement marks its second corporate buyer. Google has a contract with one of the company's Kansas wind farms.

The announcement comes a day after Gov. Mary Fallin signed House Bill 2298, which ends the zero-emissions tax credit for wind projects July 1, more than three years ahead of its previous sunset date.

"The development of the Red Dirt wind farm has been a multiyear process and Enel Green Power North America put in place and secured

agreements with certain assumptions," Enel said in a statement. "Additionally, the company has already invested a great deal of resources and planning in the development of this wind facility. While we considered not going forward with the Red Dirt project, we are a company that honors its business and financial commitments, and therefore we are proceeding with construction."

Deby Snodgrass, Oklahoma's commerce secretary, praised the Enel construction announcement.

"The wind energy industry plays a vital role in our state, thanks in part, to the investment by Enel Green Power," Snodgrass said in a news release. "Today's announcement that EGP-NA is continuing its commitment and will expand even more in Oklahoma is welcome news."

Enel Green Power North America, a subsidiary of Italy's Enel S.p.A., has spent more than \$2.3 billion on its eight wind farms in Oklahoma. The Red Dirt project will cost about \$420 million to develop and construct, the company said. Each turbine is rated at 3.15 megawatts of capacity.

San Antonio legislator says Texas should wrangle floods to ease droughts

By Brendan Gibbons

April 18, 2017 Updated: April 18, 2017 7:24pm

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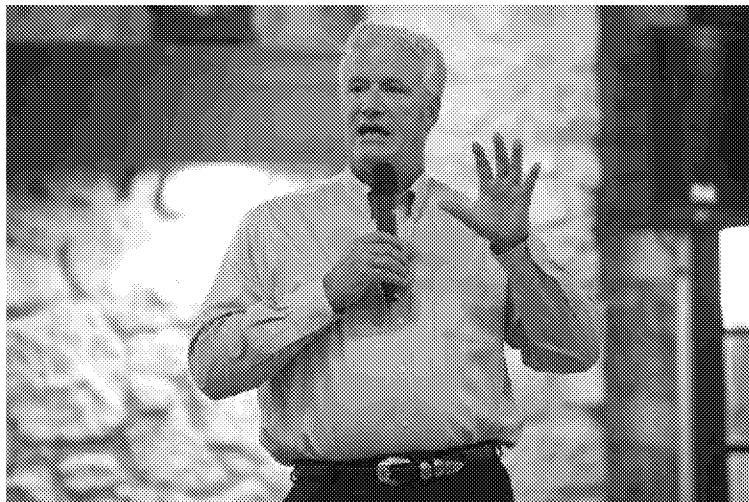


Photo: Matthew Busch /For The San Antonio Express-News

State Rep. Lyle Larson, R-San Antonio, speaking to a group in 2015, is pushing several water supply bills this legislative session.

A state

legislator from San Antonio has a plan to solve some of Texas' water woes by capturing the floodwaters that occasionally inundate the

state and stopping the evaporation that robs reservoirs of water.

Republican Rep. Lyle Larson has filed legislation to study and create incentives for getting rights to this water and storing it in underground reservoirs known as aquifer storage and recovery systems, or ASRs.

The grand proposal is not the first Larson has put forth to address Texas water shortages. Larson, who chairs the House Natural Resources Committee, is perhaps best known for his bill in the 2015 legislative session that would have required the Texas Water Development Board to study the possibility of a vast “hydrovascular network,” which opponents named “Gridzilla.” That bill passed the House but died in a Senate committee.

One Larson bill that did pass last session eased regulations on injecting water underground. Experts say this spurred more interest across the state in ASRs.

ASR is a catch-all term for storing water in a geologic layer underground where it can be retrieved for later use. As of 2016, there were 175 such systems operating in the U.S., according to information published online by ASR engineer R. David G. Pyne.

Some of the biggest adopters have been states like Florida, New Jersey, California and Oregon. In Las Vegas, Nevada, one of the country’s largest ASR systems that stores

water from Lake Mead has put away roughly 335,000 acre-feet, far more than San Antonio uses in a year.

Texas has only three ASR systems so far. These cache water for San Antonio, Kerrville and El Paso.

In South Bexar County, the San Antonio Water System is taking water it pumps from the Edwards Aquifer and sending it back underground into a different aquifer, a sandy formation called the Carrizo-Wilcox. It works a bit like a water balloon at the end of a straw, giving SAWS the ability to suck water back out in times of drought. After two rainy years, the water reserve is up to more than 120,000 acre-feet, enough for about half a year of use.

In an interview, Larson noted how much untapped water flowed to the ocean over a recent 18-month period in Texas, which often lurches between droughts and floods.

From January 2015 to June 2016, 150 million acre-feet of water flowed unused through the state's rivers and into the Gulf of Mexico or neighboring states, a figure confirmed by the Texas Water Development Board. River flow during that abnormally rainy spell accounted for more than 12 times the amount of water Texas uses in a year, according to TWDB numbers for 2015.

“If you look at the weather patterns, all of our rivers were full and we were actually in excess flow conditions in the Colorado, the Brazos, the Sabine,” Larson said. “Why are we not storing the large volume of water that’s leaving our rivers into the Gulf of Mexico?”

Though Texas’ 2017 State Water Plan includes at least 23 new ASRs, traditional dams and reservoirs still seem to be the preferred solution for big water supply projects. The plan includes 26 new reservoirs, many on the Colorado, Brazos and Guadalupe rivers, which have already been heavily dammed. By 2070, utilities are planning on seven times as much water coming from reservoirs as from ASRs per year.

“I would like to look at every reservoir we’ve got planned and see if ASRs are better options,” Larson said.

His major ASR bill, HB 3991, would change the way the state issues water rights.

In drier years, the water in many Texas rivers is spoken for. But in wet years, no one owns the extra water that often spills over the banks, inundates the floodplains and rushes to the Gulf.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality is the state’s water referee in these matters, issuing permits to use surface water and requiring annual reports to account for that use. Larson’s bill would allow the TCEQ to

issue permits for “excess flows in a watercourse or stream that would otherwise flow into the Gulf of Mexico.”

There are a few caveats. These new rights, which Larson calls “excess flow credits,” cannot take water from those with existing rights or do damage to environmental flows, the portion of water in a river or stream the TCEQ says is necessary to keep the ecosystem alive.

That has not reassured some environmentalists. In a House Natural Resources Committee hearing last week, retired Lone Star Sierra Club director Ken Kramer and National Wildlife Federation attorney Myron Hess testified against the bill.

Both said that while they support ASRs, the amount of water budgeted for environmental flows does not actually account for all the water needed for river, bay and estuary ecosystems.

“The current environmental flow standards don’t do it,” Hess said.

Another part of the bill would also make available more water for ASRs that would otherwise be lost to evaporation. Every year, 60 to 80 percent of the water in Texas reservoirs disappears into the air as water vapor, according to the Texas Water Development Board.

HB 3991 would let the TCEQ issue “evaporation credits” by crediting water rights holders with water that would evaporate from a surface reservoir but would not be lost in an ASR.

In other Western states from Arizona to Oregon that have built ASRs, many would allow water rights holders to use floodwaters during wet years, according to Western States Water Council executive director Tony Willardson and legal counsel Michelle Bushman.

But to their knowledge, no other state has a system quite like the one Larson is proposing.

“The biggest obstacle is just having surface water to recharge for most states,” Willardson said. “All of that water usually is oversubscribed, and unless there’s major flood flows, you usually don’t have any water to use.”

Willardson also said Larson’s evaporation credit idea appears to be unique.

“Obviously, there are debits to your storage water for the evaporation,” he said. “But I’ve never heard them being transferred to an ASR as this would allow.”

Longtime Austin water lawyer Russell Johnson, who has represented SAWS in battles over the Edwards Aquifer, the city’s main water source, said Larson’s idea is a bold

first step in implementing ASRs for storing surface water.

“I’m a true believer,” Johnson said. “You’re talking to someone having dealt in this area a long time, and I’m fully 100-percent supportive of the effort.”

Another Larson bill, HB 2005, directs the Texas water board to study the state’s aquifers for whether they could host ASRs. The House approved it April 12.

Larson’s bills may clear a regulatory path for ASRs, but technical challenges will remain.

TWDB deputy executive administrator Robert Mace said the question for utilities is how much water they would want to store and whether their particular aquifer could effectively hold that amount. They also should think about water quality in the aquifer used for storage, he said.

“You have to worry about putting water in and actually liberating something that is affixed on the rocks or is maybe in the native water, that when you pump it back out you don’t want,” he said.

Utilities would also have to figure out how to handle so much water at once, Johnson said. In flood times, raging rivers would deliver water faster than could be injected underground.

“The real challenge is how do you put it into the aquifer rapidly,” Johnson said. Even one cubic foot per second of water “is a lot of water real quick,” he said.

State law also requires that the water being injected be equal or better in quality to the water already in the aquifer. That might still require a small reservoir off the river’s main channel where water can be stored and treated before being injected into an ASR, Mace said.

“Operationally, it’s probably going to make sense to have some storage ability to be able to maximize the volume of water you can have for injection,” Mace said. “In most cases, you can’t take flood water and inject straight into the aquifer.”

HB 3991 is pending in committee.

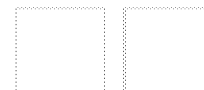
EPA considers repealing two Obama air pollution rules

BY TIMOTHY CAMA - 04/18/17 06:54 PM EDT

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The Trump administration is considering whether to repeal or revise two major Obama administration regulations limiting air pollution from large sources.

Justice Department attorneys asked the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit late Tuesday to delay scheduled oral arguments in two separate cases involving the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules.

The most major action concerns the landmark 2012 Mercury and Air Toxics Standards rule, one of the most costly Obama administration rules that has been responsible for shutting down hundreds of coal-fired power plants.

The EPA is reviewing whether it supports a 2016 regulation that the Obama administration wrote to fix a problem that the Supreme Court found when it ruled in 2015 that the EPA did not follow the law in writing the mercury rule.

“In light of the recent change in Administration, EPA requests continuance of the oral argument to give the appropriate officials adequate time to fully review the supplemental finding,” the attorneys wrote, adding that the prior positions taken by the agency with respect to the supplemental finding may not necessarily reflect its ultimate conclusions after that review is complete.”

The administration did not indicate whether it is reviewing the underlying 2012 rule.

But Earthjustice, which is representing numerous organizations in the litigation to defend the rule, slammed action, saying it is an attack on the mercury standards.

“These limits on power plant pollution, which have now been in place for two years, have cut power plants’ emissions and greatly reduced the threat to kids’ health and development,” James Pew, the Earthjustice attorney on the case, said in a statement.

“Scrapping them now would bring poisons back into kids’ lungs, blood, and brains and will cause thousands of people to die — prematurely and unnecessarily — from breathing in power plants’ soot pollution.”

Scott Pruitt, now the EPA’s administrator, sued to stop the rule when he was attorney general of Oklahoma, labeling it part of the Obama administration’s “war on coal.”

The Obama administration had predicted that the rule would cost \$9.6 billion, produce between \$37 billion and \$90 billion in benefits and prevent up to 11,000 premature deaths and 130,000 asthma cases annually.

The Supreme Court’s 2015 Michigan v. EPA decision said that the agency should have completed a cost-benefit analysis before deciding whether to write

the regulation, but it did not overturn the rule. It did such an analysis, but only after deciding to proceed with the rulemaking process.

The 2016 regulation simply applied the existing cost-benefit analysis to the earlier step in the process. Conservative states, business groups and the energy industry challenged it in court.

The other regulation now under Trump administration review was written in 2015 to end an exemption that let some major pollution sources like power plants exceed emissions limits during startup, shutdown or malfunction.

The Trump attorneys made a similar argument in that filing, saying that the change of administration means the EPA may not support the rule anymore.

Since the regulations have been made final, any attempt to repeal them would have to go through a standard rulemaking process that could take a year or more.

The rule on startup, shutdown and malfunction exemptions applies specifically to 36 states that allow such increases in emissions.

Pruitt also challenged that rule as Oklahoma's attorney general.

President Trump signed an executive order last month directing various agencies, including the EPA, to work to repeal nearly all of former President Obama's climate change agenda, and to identify and remove barriers to production and use of domestic energy.

It did not mention either of the rules subject to Tuesday's filings specifically.

The administration has already asked that federal courts hold off on numerous cases involving Obama regulations that it is reviewing, including those regarding carbon dioxide emissions from power plants, the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act and ozone pollution.

Eddy County boasts cleaner air in new report

Maddy Hayden , Carlsbad Current-Argus 1:05 a.m. MT April 19, 2017



(Photo: David J. Phillip)

The newly released American Lung Association's "State of the Air" report awarded Eddy County a "C" grade for high ozone levels in the atmosphere - up from an "F" last year.

Ground level ozone (commonly known as "smog") is created from chemical reactions between oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds when exposed to sunlight, something New Mexico has plenty of.

"Air quality is getting better in Eddy County," said JoAnna Strother, Regional Director of Public Policy for the American Lung Association of the Southwest.

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The report is a compilation of three years of the most recently available Environmental Protection Agency data: in this case, from 2013 to 2015.

Eddy County recorded six "orange" days during that time, meaning the ozone concentration in the air was "unhealthy for sensitive groups."

The county recorded 14 "orange" days in last year's report.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, ozone pollution can cause respiratory problems including worsened asthma, cardiovascular problems and reproductive and developmental harm.

Ozone pollution is mostly caused by vehicle exhaust, emissions from industrial facilities chemical solvents, according to the EPA.

Strother said 2015 was an exceptionally clean year for many areas of the country.

Strother credited, in part, cleaner automobiles with the decrease in pollution levels.

The El Paso and Las Cruces area, grouped together in the report, is listed as the 16th most ozone polluted urban area in the country, the same as last year.

Doña Ana County, which contains Las Cruces, topped the ozone pollution list in New Mexico, with 47 "orange" days and one "red" day recorded.

Sandoval and Santa Fe counties are among the cleanest counties in the nation for ozone pollution, according to the report, and reported no high ozone days throughout the three-year period.

"The Clean Air Act, we're big proponents of that," Strother said. "That's what helps clean up air pollution."

Earlier this month, President Donald Trump ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to review three regulations under the Clean Air Act.

Among them is the 2016 Oil and Gas New Source Performance Standards, which limits methane and volatile organic compound emissions from new oil and gas operations.

"The Clean Air Act must remain intact and enforced to enable the nation to continue to protect all Americans from the dangers of air pollution," the report reads.

The report also measures particle pollution, which accounts for matter like dust, dirt, soot and smoke in the air.

However, Eddy County does not have a particle pollution monitor, Strother said.

Neighboring Lea County received a "B" rating for particle pollution, with one "orange" and one "red" day recorded.

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The report is available at www.lung.org (<http://www.lung.org>).

Maddy Hayden may be reached at 575-628-5512, mahayden@currentargus.com and @Maddy_J_Hayden on Twitter.

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Sales go Kaput: Wild hog poison halted due to concerns for Louisiana black bears

- THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
- APR 19, 2017 - 7:57 AM



MONROE, La. (AP) — The Louisiana Agriculture Commissioner has suspended the eventual sale of poison designed to curb the wild hog population due to concerns over its effect on the Louisiana Black Bear.

News outlets report Louisiana Agriculture Commissioner Mike Strain has halted the sale of Kaput after seeing a video showing how easily Louisiana Black Bears can access poison in feeders. The Louisiana Black Bear was removed from the endangered species list last year.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has estimated Louisiana is home to more than 600,000 or more wild hogs, second only to Texas. The hogs are destructive to Louisiana crops like sugarcane, soybeans and corn.

Strain says they don't want to hit non-targeted species and they're not going to quit until a solution is found.

Construction begins on segment of New Mexico power line

By Associated Press

Published: Tuesday, April 18th, 2017 at 8:29am

Updated: Tuesday, April 18th, 2017 at 1:34pm

AMARILLO, Texas — Xcel Energy has started construction in New Mexico on a 345-kilovolt transmission line meant to hook up with electric distribution operations in Texas.

Formal groundbreaking ceremonies were held Tuesday near Hobbs, New Mexico, as part of the \$400 million project. Officials say the line should be in service in 2018 and could eventually connect with a substation north of Abernathy, Texas, pending regulatory approval.

A similar Xcel project was completed in 2014 connecting the Texas substation to a unit near Woodward, Oklahoma.

Xcel officials say when all the segments are completed the company should have more than 400 miles (644 kilometers) of transmission from western Oklahoma to southeastern New Mexico.